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How Does the Secondary School Library Become an Instructional Materials Center? Personnel, Program, Materials, Housing.

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Objectives of this paper are: (1) to provide a practical point of view, based on experience of library and audiovisual practitioners, for expanding secondary school library programs into instructional materials center programs as demanded by instructional programs involving flexible scheduling, inquiry, and independent study; (2) to provide an annotated bibliography of pertinent comment and illustrations from school administration, architecture, library, and audiovisual journals, books, and media; and (3) to make available to school administrators and planners selected sources on these topics. The instructional materials center, as defined for this discussion, is a library with broader than traditional purpose, housing more diversified and extensive collections of materials. It is staffed by leaders with varied general experience and specializations in library, curriculum, and media, who work supportively with staff and students. Topics discussed include personnel, program, materials, the indexing system, budget, and housing spatial allocation. An annotated bibliography of 24 items is appended. (Author/JB)

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OREGON SCHOOL STUDY COUNCIL

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BULLETIN



HOW DOES THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LIBRARY
BECOME AN
INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS CENTER?

--Personnel, Program,
Materials, Housing

By
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OREGON SCHOOL STUDY COUNCIL

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Introduction

Few secondary schools today can exhibit libraries which capably support their instructional programs. Articles written by experienced librarians, audiovisual specialists and media generalists have concentrated on the positive aspects of the school's learning center, and it is easy to forget that in many of our high schools the libraries are not changing with the curriculum; that their leadership, their collections, and improvement of their quarters move slowly, if at all. Failing to reach students and teachers with new ideas, lacking the supporting and background materials for a television and visual media influenced curriculum, hostile or impervious to challenging or controversial points of view, our libraries stagnate in self-contained, rectangular, double-classroom quarters, out of the school's mainstream.

The Need for Guidelines

Administrators and school personnel seem to be in search of guidelines for creating centers of learning, whether called libraries, instructional materials centers, or learning resource centers, which can expand continuously, relate to the entire school program, and eventually tie in with local or regional information centers.

This paper proposes to do three things:

- (1) To provide a practical point of view, based on experience of library and audiovisual practitioners, for expanding secondary school library programs into instructional materials center programs as demanded by instructional programs involving flexible scheduling, inquiry, and independent study.
- (2) To provide an annotated bibliography of pertinent comment and illustrations from school administration, architecture, library, and audiovisual journals, books, and media.
- (3) To make available to school administrators and planners selected sources on these topics.

The instructional materials center, as defined for this discussion, is a library with broader than traditional purpose, housing more diversified and extensive collections of materials. It is staffed by

leaders with varied general experience and specializations in library, curriculum, and media, who work enthusiastically and supportively with staff and students. Because of its relatively new appearance on the school scene, the definitions of the IMC's physical form and its program are less clearly defined in the literature.

(5, 7, 15, 17, 22)

There are school libraries which demonstrate all the above characteristics. Their name has not yet changed - and perhaps it doesn't need to. There are instructional materials centers in name only, planned and built perhaps, by innovative architects, but staffed by conservative or inadequately trained leaders.

Personnel

As we pinpoint the needs for the instructional materials center, the first is leadership. An IMC leader must combine qualities of stamina and imagination with administrative ability and many varieties of educational experience: stamina to equip the IMC leader for covering the larger physical area and broader span of responsibilities, imagination for a field as yet viewed "through a glass darkly." Administration of an IMC is intricately involved with staff, students, and school program. A well-executed IMC program relates to community resources, school, inter-school and district personnel, and maintains multi-level inter-library cooperation. Inservice and graduate experience with library, curriculum, and audiovisual theory and practice enriches the IMC program through its IMC leaders. Experience as a school librarian is not necessarily sufficient training.

Where can a school administrator locate an IMC leader of this description? Many times he will find one on his own staff - an exemplary teacher displaying broad interests and curiosity and willing to complete a year or two of advanced work in library and media studies. Others may be found as authors of promising articles for audiovisual or library journals. Directors of school library, curriculum or media NDEA Institutes are still another source.

Such people will be in demand since their scarce skills have been

developed through much study and interaction with others. It should be considered that they are both teachers and administrators, and rewards for their work should be reflected in salaries commensurate with their value to the school program.

Professional organizations in school library and audiovisual fields are currently developing guidelines for staffing IMC's. Until these are available, school administrators who know the needs of their schools must select staff with these requirements in mind: planning and administrative ability, curriculum knowledge, practical ability in graphic and technical services and understanding of their relation to learning theory.

(3, 5, 7c, 9, 15, 19, 22a, 24)

Program

The second need in developing an IMC is for a different type of program than most school libraries profess to offer. A strong IMC program is a full-time "demonstration project." Each phase, each individual activity, each student/staff combination may be based on no previous similar experience, but each is guided by staff conviction that the pleasure of accomplishment must be accompanied by the right to fail and try again, by the "security to take risks."

Perhaps the larger difference is in the attitude of the IMC and the rest of the school staff toward student responsibility. The IMC is designed, constructed and directed around the contemporary theory that inquiry, self-direction and independent study must be based on a trust in student ability to carry through a self-directed and teacher-directed study program again accompanied by the right to succeed or fail, in a reality-based learning experience.

It is possible to visit instructional materials centers where this philosophy is obviously not in practice. Over-concern with loss of materials, locked doors on many IMC rooms, stringent rules for IMC use, insufficient budgets all offer evidence of lack of faith in students' willingness to assume a larger part of the responsibility for educating themselves. Questions directed toward these conditions are answered in terms of lack of concern by administration, fear of student misconduct, or administrative red tape problems.

The entire school faculty is a part of the strong IMC program. Selection of materials, instruction of students, and coordination of presentations all involve more than the IMC staff. IMC staffing involves people: specialists (the classroom teachers), generalists (the IMC personnel), and administrators (school administrators and IMC administrators). An IMC staff which calls on all this talent for information or assistance, and which concentrates on knowing which materials and techniques can best serve these specialists, best serves its school.

(3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 15, 17, 22a, 22b, 23)

Materials

The strong IMC program includes many more kinds of learning materials than a library. Current publications from government and organization sources, films of priceless documents, magazines and specialized journals whose back files extend ten or more years on microfilm; non-verbal learning opportunities through visual or musical sources all have an appropriate place in IMC collections. Other IMC services include: maintenance of living laboratories, special exhibits and collections, learning centers in various disguises, book collections, and machines (with directions for use clearly on them) ready for immediate use in many locations to project or facilitate the use of unique learning materials.

Index

The IMC materials collection and program are based on a centralized indexing system for all the learning materials within the school. There should be no attempt to contain these materials within the IMC if they will be more constructively utilized in other areas, but the IMC does "control" all materials within its index. It indicates their locations, if they are not within the IMC; it describes their contents, by subject headings; it describes their difficulty level, their appearance, and their use. The IMC index indicates their relation to other learning materials which might supplement, enhance or extend the learning experience. If necessary, duplicated indexes may be provided at distant locations in the school.

Whether books begin or end the categories of instructional materials they tend to be the catalysts for other materials. For this reason the indexing system cannot end with a card catalog of books, but must include all the materials of learning, whether wall maps, audiovisual depository catalogs from other areas of the country, or resource persons outside the school system.

Budget

IMC budgets may seem to dwarf library budgets. It must be remembered, however, that IMC budgets are structured to include services, supplies, machines and staff which are not as a rule expected of libraries, and which may previously have been allocated to other departments of the school.

Failure to provide a sufficient beginning budget for the IMC from such sources as the school construction fund or federal grants can have a pernicious effect on the IMC program. Nothing has such a quietly insidious long-range effect on student and teacher morale as a library or instructional materials center with insufficient materials for its population. The contents of the collection on opening day are fully as important then as they will be at any other time during the IMC's existence; they must equal a vigorous, well-rounded, appropriately duplicated collection.

This is one segment of the building fund budget where the decision on whether to allocate an additional ten or twenty thousand dollars will be felt a thousand ways a year - for many years. Better, perhaps, to limit the budget of an individual department or area for a year or two than to reduce funding for an IMC which serves and affects the entire program daily.

(1, 4, 5, 7c, 9, 24)

As school administrators well know, with each new acquisition of learning materials it is possible to increase administrative and storage problems. An IMC program is guided by a philosophy of content rather than physical form of materials, and should be housed within a structure which can store oddly-shaped learning materials with a minimum of crisis

situations. An IMC whose goals and objectives have been carefully planned and communicated does not ensnare its acquisition program in red tape. When purchase orders to foreign publishers, out-of-print dealers, or other unusual sources arrive at the purchasing department, evaluation of the importance of the materials to the program has gone before, and support of the program is understood.

Housing

How is the design for an IMC created? The school administrator is most closely associated with the IMC during one period of its existence - during its conception. If he has been wise enough to seek consultation with an experienced IMC leader before selecting the architect, the gestation period will be an easier time for all.

No other area of the school is designed so closely around a statement of the school's goals and objectives. Will students move freely to acquire materials needed for learning? Will audio and visual materials be located in carrels for independent use by students? Will there be a depth as well as a breadth to the collection of materials, necessitating stack and storage areas for less-often used materials? Will students produce their own graphics for class presentations, necessitating a larger production area? Will independent study scheduling require that study carrels be provided both within and outside of the IMC structure? If teachers expect original research, can science and social science areas provide experiment and inquiry spaces? Will historical research needs be provided for by extensive vertical files, indexes, and microform information? Each of these decisions implies a philosophic point of view for spatial allocation. No architect can plan without an understanding of how these questions will be answered.

(9, 16, 21)

The collection within the IMC index, whether housed centrally or decentrally, will be comprised of hundreds of separate and unique items of different sizes, shapes, contents and uses. Some will require specially designed storage units; some can be housed in standard containers. Others will be accompanied by their own machines, non-compatible with

standard machines. No school administrator can be expected to carry sole responsibility for detailed planning. However, he can and should:

- Contact consultants. They are available through universities and professional organizations such as the American Library Association and the Department of Audiovisual Instruction, both divisions of the National Education Association.
- Contact practicing librarians and audiovisual specialists from local or nearby districts. They face and solve these types of problems daily.
- Visit libraries of other secondary schools, community colleges, and colleges. They have much more in common than we have allowed ourselves to believe.
- See that planning is based on research and designs compatible with journal articles on school libraries, audiovisual departments and administration. Several excellent guides to planning such quarters are listed in the appended bibliography or contained in the loan packet of materials. Architects and media specialists will know of others.

(1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7a, 7b, 7c, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22b, 24)

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An instructional materials center is a considerable investment, but properly designed and staffed, it will give an investment return which can be measured in student involvement, faculty cooperation, and curriculum improvement. What more could we ask?

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